

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1: (Canceled)

Claim 2: (Canceled)

Claim 3: (Canceled)

Claim 4: (Canceled)

Claim 5: (Canceled)

Claim 6: (Canceled)

Claim 7: (Canceled)

Claim 8: (Canceled)

Claim 9: (Canceled)

Claim 10: (Canceled)

Claim 11: (Canceled)

Claim 12: (Canceled)

Claim 13: (Canceled)

Claim 14: (Canceled)

Claim 15: (Canceled)

Claim 16: (Canceled)

Claim 17: (Canceled)

Claim 18: (Canceled)

Claim 19: (Canceled)

Claim 20: (Canceled)

Claim 21: (New) A dental instrument comprising:

an actuating assembly having an actuating end; and

a grasping assembly, coupled to the actuating assembly at a transition area of the actuating end, adapted to conform to a desired contour;

wherein the instrument facilitates interproximal placement or manipulation of a matrix band appliance.

Claim 22: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the instrument facilitates mesial interproximal placement or manipulation of a matrix band appliance.

Claim 23: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the instrument facilitates distal interproximal placement or manipulation of a matrix band appliance.

Claim 24: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the desired contour comprises lateral curvature.

Claim 25: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the desired contour comprises longitudinal curvature.

Claim 26: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the desired contour comprises lateral angulation.

Claim 27: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the desired contour comprises longitudinal angulation.

Claim 28: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the desired contour is concave with respect to the actuating assembly.

Claim 29: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the desired contour is convex with respect to the actuating assembly.

Claim 30: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the grasping assembly comprises a plurality of members, each having a grasping surface.

Claim 31: (New) The instrument of claim 30, wherein an innermost grasping assembly member comprises an apical seat near the top of its grasping surface.

Claim 32: (New) The instrument of claim 30, wherein an outermost grasping assembly member comprises an apical seat near the top of its grasping surface.

Claim 33: (New) The instrument of claim 21, further comprising a locking assembly disposed along the actuating assembly.

Claim 34: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the grasping assembly is removable coupled to the actuating assembly.

Claim 35: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the grasping assembly is permanently coupled to the actuating assembly.

Claim 36: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the grasping assembly is formed integrally with the actuating assembly.

Claim 37: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the actuating assembly is a bifurcated actuating assembly.

Claim 38: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the grasping assembly is adapted to facilitate interproximal placement or manipulation of a matrix band appliance.

Claim 39: (New) The instrument of claim 21, wherein the actuating assembly is adapted to facilitate interproximal placement or manipulation of a matrix band appliance.

Claim 40: (New) A method of manipulating an interproximal matrix band appliance, the method comprising the steps of:

providing an actuating assembly having an actuating end;

providing a grasping assembly, coupled to the actuating assembly at a transition area of the actuating end, adapted to conform to the contour of the interproximal matrix band appliance;

grasping the interproximal matrix band appliance with the grasping assembly; and

interproximally placing or manipulating the matrix band appliance.